

Testimony of Gary Dixon
Southern Connecticut State University Student
Appropriations Committee
February 15, 2017

Representative Walker, Senator Osten, Senator Formica, and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you tonight.

On January 3, 2012 I sat in a classroom with people young enough to possibly be my children and a professor closer in age to one of my younger siblings at The Ohio State University. Overwhelmed, excited and unsure of my decision, I dived in. Two classes at first, then Three when we switched from quarters to semesters. Working full-time as I attended part-time, I was learning yet disconnected as a commuter – swimming in a sea of 45,000 with an end goal somewhat in sight.

In 2015, life called and told me I was headed to New Haven, Connecticut. Southern Connecticut State University opened its arms and welcomed me in January 2016. Federally funded resources made space for me attend full-time as I worked off-campus part-time. Swimming in a smaller pond, the fall semester opened doors by way of the SAGE (Sexuality and Gender Equality) Center as a Student Ambassador, opportunities to co-present at our Social Justice Retreat and participate as a panelist for the English Department's Fall 2016 Colloquium. As a non-traditional, LGBTQ+ student of color, I am connecting with my community through my work as a student ambassador while developing my voice as a creative writer looking to document the lives of people underrepresented in literature.

As I reflect on the importance of higher education in my journey, it has played a significant role in giving me the tools needed to combine my passions of writing and social justice activism. Tools needed to ensure our future children have opportunities to pursue their interests through an avenue, such as college, so that they are able to pass on what they've learned to the generations yet to be born.

That is why I ask you to keep public higher education a priority for you this year.

Thank you again for the opportunity to tell my story tonight

Gary Dixon